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UNCLAS HARARE 002891

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL, SIMS AND AF/S
NSC FOR JFRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO 21](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT: NYAROTA FIRED; HARARE

REF: HARARE 2616

- ¶1. Geoffrey Nyarota (52), award-winning Editor-in-Chief of the "Daily News," has been fired by the newspaper's board of directors. His deputy, Davison Maruziva, who had been asked to step in as acting editor by management, has also resigned in protest against Nyarota's dismissal. Circumstances leading to Nyarota's separation from Zimbabwe's only independent daily newspaper are still murky, but seem to be linked to an ongoing labor dispute between journalists and management.
- ¶2. In today's paper, Sam Nkomo, chairman of Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (parent company of the "Daily News"), states that Nyarota was terminated by the board with immediate effect, but fails to provide a reason for his dismissal. According to the BBC, Nyarota denies having been fired and says he "resigned for the good of the paper." Many sources say that Nyarota's dismissal has to do with an ongoing strike by the paper's staff, who are seeking a 150% cost of living salary increase. The "Daily News" has been crippled by the industrial action, failing to produce a paper December 21 - 30, 2002.
- ¶3. In March 1999 Nyarota, together with other local and foreign investors, launched the "Daily News," a newspaper that now has the highest circulation in Zimbabwe. The paper has generally lived up to its motto of "telling it like it is." Its principled, tenacious, independent style of journalism has earned praise at home and abroad. Nyarota himself has been the recipient of numerous international awards, including the World Association of Newspapers' annual press freedom award in May 2002. Despite death threats, arrests and the bombing of his newspaper's printing press in January 2001, Nyarota continued to publish articles critical of the Mugabe administration. Under his stewardship, the newspaper incurred the wrath of the government of Zimbabwe, which has accused it of being a mouthpiece for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), a charge Nyarota strongly denies.
- ¶4. The Daily News is back on the streets today, printing for the first time since December 21. Today's paper is however far shorter than usual (only 12 pages) and has very little advertising. Today's edition breaks the story of Nyarota's dismissal and announces a new editorial team to be lead by John Gambanga, Acting Editor. Nyasha Nyakunu, has been elevated to the position of News Editor with immediate effect. Other appointments include Tendayi Nyakunu as Assistant Editor, Pedzisayi Ruhanya as Deputy News Editor, and Bill Saidi as Managing Editor. Both Gambanga (April 1999) and Nyakunu (September 2002) are former participants in the Department's International Visitor program.
- ¶5. Comment: The "Daily News" is the second of Zimbabwe's four independent newspapers to undergo an editorial shake-up in the past six weeks. The highly respected weekly "Financial Gazette" lost veteran editor Francis Mdlunga in late November after a change in ownership of the paper's parent company. (See reftel for additional details.) Readers will be watching both the "Daily" and the "Fingaz" for signals that the either paper's fiercely independent editorial stance has shifted under new leadership.

WHITEHEAD